

## Training Issues: Reassessment of Literacy Efforts, Barriers to Diversity and Language Issues

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This session reassessed current literacy efforts and also examined efforts to address language issues and other barriers to diversity in the NIEHS WETP training community. The breakout session began with participants explaining how and if they were addressing limited literacy and language issues of trainees in their existing training programs and what challenges they currently faced. The major challenges they outlined were: the lack of appropriate training materials, the lack of Spanish-speaking trainers, trainee literacy problems, and the need to train beyond the U.S. borders in order to reach workers entering this country. Currently most awardees that attended this session have translated training materials into languages other than English and have Spanish speaking trainers and translators/interpreters. In order to overcome literacy barriers some awardees shared that they were incorporating more participatory and activity-based activities into their training as well as converting exams to a pictorial format, were engaging in more hands-on training sessions, starting vocational ESL classes, creating a Learn at Home Literacy Program in order to help trainees keep their literacy levels anonymous, and engaging in some limited literacy peer help. Some awardees are also concentrating on training in Mexican Border States. Some grantees explained that since most of their trainees spoke English fluently they did not see the need to incorporate other languages into their training. The facilitators pointed out that even if immigrant workers are fluent in English, they might participate more and feel more comfortable if the training is conducted in their native/first language. When asked for a show of hands of those who speak or are learning Spanish, 4 out of 22 present said they fit in that category.

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Dinorah Barton-Antonio from the CAC/LOHP at UC Berkeley spoke to the group about cultural competence tools when working with Spanish speaking workers. She explained that the challenge lies in low-literacy skills as well as cultural issues. Culturally speaking, most Latino workers are employed in non-unionized companies. They enjoy being part of a group yet it is hard to feel included and as a part of the culture. Therefore, it is important to incorporate team projects and activities into trainings with Spanish speaking workers. Many feel they lack power and lack the understanding of issues and therefore feel a limited ability to make change. For this reason, it is important for them to have the knowledge about risks and standards. And because there is a strong anti-immigrant sentiment in this country, trainings should allow them to become comfortable and to feel empowered. Therefore, unions play an important role in helping workers feel empowered. Popular education, peer education, and adult education work by allowing workers to share with each other and show that they can make a difference. A participant explained that another challenge when working with Spanish speaking workers is the many different Spanish dialects. Therefore it is important to incorporate pictures or to add the other ways of saying that word in your documents. (e.g., there are several words/terms in Spanish for the English term "forklift.")

Marianne Brown from the CAC/UCLA-LOSH Program made her Power Point presentation available in a handout since there was not enough time in this breakout to present it to the group. In summary it emphasizes that immigrant workers do not receive adequate health and safety training. Training for them should address their unique needs. It is important to make training Relevant, Active, Participatory, and to have co-workers who are similar to them do the training. Marianne suggested that anyone interested in this issue obtain a copy of the publication Safety is Seguridad which is available from the National Academies of Science/National Research Council. It consists of proceedings/papers from a

NAS/NIOSH conference held in May 2002, which focused on how to reach Spanish-speaking workers with health and safety information and training. It may be available for download on the NAS website or can be purchased by contacting them.

The facilitators made a great deal of materials in Spanish and on limited literacy issues available to participants and encouraged them to visit the the UCLA Labor Occupational Safety and Health (LOSH) Program website at [www.losch.ucla.edu](http://www.losch.ucla.edu) for more materials in Spanish. Marianne Brown asked people to contact her at [ahelmer@ucla.edu](mailto:ahelmer@ucla.edu) if they needed certain educational materials for workers in Spanish and could not find them as Ms. Helmer at UCLA-LOSH can develop factsheets in Spanish as needed for WETP awardees. In addition, it was decided that it would be a good idea to create a network to share ideas for cultural competence, maybe through the Clearinghouse.

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